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ABSTRACT

To assist educators building new programs in educational administration, the author describes six devices used at Southwest Texas State University to promote and market its educational administration division. The devices include conferences, internships, a newsletter, graduate followup, job placement, and the uniqueness of the program itself. The division's six conferences a year attract elementary and secondary administrators from all over Texas. Its administrative intern program gives the division access to practicing school administrators and thereby aids recruiting. The newsletter provides visibility for the program and promotes information dissemination about its faculty and graduates and about new administrative processes. Through the job placement and graduate followup devices, the division keeps track of its graduates' progress, gets feedback on its program, and provides a service to attract prospective students. Meeting the needs of both its students and public schools makes the program unique and easier to market. (Author/RW)

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PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR A DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

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PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR A DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

College and University graduate programs across these United States are struggling for their very existance as signs of declining enrollment appear on the horizon. The most well known and respected graduate programs are maintaining equilibrium. This handful of prestigious graduate programs provide miniscul numbers to meet the needs of society. The problem becomes one of building a reputation, selling the program to students, maintaining credibility, and producing a saleable product. This paper outlines a systematic approach for marketing, promoting, and progressing with an emerging educational administration preparation program.

CONFERENCES

A major contributor to the emergence of Southwest Texas State as a leading preparer of school administrators has been the "Wimberley Conferences." These two day conferences are held on a resort-dude ranch near the SWT campus. Each year six conferences are held, one each for superintendents, secondary principals, assistant principals, middle school-junior high school principals, elementary principals, and curriculum supervisors and leaders.

Invitations to the conferences are sent to school administrators in all geographic areas of the state. The administrators invited are more than graduates of the SWT program, all preparation institutions in the state are represented. This braod representation, both geographically and institutionally, has provided recognition for the SWT educational administration program. School administrators have become advocates for our program regardless of their initial loyalties.

The format of the conference provides and allows for an informal exchange of ideas among the participants. The SWT faculty acts only

as facilitators for the small group meetings. The various conferences provide the SWT faculty with information and current concerns among the practicing school administrators in Texas.

The positive feelings generated by collegial relationships between the conference participants and the SWT faculty can not be duplicated by any other activity available to the SWT educational administration division. The public relations effects of these conferences are the spring board for the entire public relations activity of the division.

INTERNSHIPS

The administrative internships allow the SWT faculty access to practicing school administrators. Knowing the educational leaders of many school districts on a personal basis has helped the recruiting process for prospective school administrators. Recommendations of the SWT program by these practicing administrators is the best PR our program can receive.

As the SWT faculty travels around the state visiting interns, ideas are exchanged. The faculty is able to generate a feeling of good will and trust which carries over into the instructional program.

NEWSLETTER

The production of the Educational Administrator has provided visability for the SWT educational administration. This newsletter contains information about the program, activities of faculty members, and articles which provide new or different administrative processes. The newsletter contains class offerings for future semesters. In addition information about graduates of the program is included.

Over 1200 of these newsletters are mailed to school adminsitrators in Texas. The response from receiving this information has

been more than gratifying both as a recruiting tool and as a source of information dissemination.

GRADUATE FOLLOW-UP

The graduate follow-up program in educational administration has proven to be benefical, not only for the accumulated data, but as a device to solicit constructive input from graduates and their supervisors. Each graduate is mailed an opinionaire with questions about coursework and its applicability to their administrative position. At the same time the graduates superior is answering questions about the graduate.

This follow-up format provides data about the program and data about the product of the program. With this information the faculty can make necessary changes when trends appear in the follow-up data. The follow-up program allows the division to keep track of its graduates as they progress the professional ladder.

PLACEMENT

The SWT educational administration division receives many requests from superintendents for candidates for their respective principalships and administrative positions. As these requests become known to our division, we nominate several candidates for the position. These nominations are made with the prospective adminstrator in mind. It is our purpose to match people with positions.

It is the divisions judgement that we have been successful in placing our graduates. We are now starting to get requests from the same school districts for more of our graduates, an indication of satisfaction with the product. The students who enter our program know that if they work hard and show potential, we will get them placed in an administrative position.

This fact alone has caused our program to grow and the informal word has gotten out that SWT takes care of its people. This is the kind of recognition that an emerging program needs to be successful.

PROGRAM UNIQUENESS

In order to sell the product you possess it must contain qualities which are different form all other similar products. At SWT the uniqueness is two fold: (1) the program meets the needs of students; and (2) the program meets the needs of public schools.

The student is considered as course schedules and program outlines are developed. Students are allowed some flexibility in program design depending upon their administrative aspirations.

The needs of public school administrators are incorporated into the coursework in order to prepare the graduate with the necessary tools, skills, and concepts. The student is taught the process of school administration.

Combining student needs with school needs has caused the SWT program to surface as a unique entity among institutions preparing school administrators.

These are but a few of the many public relations ideas any program could use in developing the necessary recognition to grow and prosper. Working with people for a common purpose has provided the Southwest Texas State University educational resources to develop and emerge successfully.